



**Oregon Natural Desert Association Testimony on Senate Bill 969**  
**Submitted to the Oregon Senate Committee on Energy and Environment**  
**February 26, 2025**

Oregon Natural Desert Association (ONDA) is a public interest conservation organization with a mission to protect, defend, and restore Oregon’s high desert. ONDA maintains offices in Bend and Portland, and represents more than 25,000 members and supporters in Oregon and across the United States.

Climate change is an existential threat to desert ecosystems in Oregon, and Oregon’s dry side is warming faster than most of the rest of the country. ONDA appreciates the urgent need to reduce carbon emissions and we have a long history of working with partners to achieve shared goals of quickly and responsibly developing renewable energy sources in our state.

SB 969 would eliminate state Energy Facility Siting Council (EFSC) review and certification of certain energy development proposed on federal public lands in Oregon. In December 2024, the federal Bureau of Land Management completed a multi-year planning process that identified more than 900,000 acres of public lands deemed most appropriate for siting solar energy facilities in Oregon based on an array of factors.<sup>1</sup> This new plan would normally provide a robust framework for implementing SB 969, except that the future of the plan is now in question under the Trump administration. The Bureau’s new plan also did not analyze public lands for development of wind energy facilities, electric power plants, and major electrical transmission lines, which SB 969 also waives from EFSC review.

SB 969 could be strategically amended to overcome the uncertainty and gaps in federal policy and planning and support more expeditious siting on public lands by recognizing in state law the same wildlife habitats, cultural and historic resources and other values that the Bureau of Land Management has already determined would disqualify development on public lands in the 2024 plan. This would ensure that, regardless of whether and how federal policy shifts and evolves over time, the state of Oregon remains committed to efficiently developing renewable energy while also conserving irreplaceable resources and values that Oregonians enjoy on our public lands.

ONDA would be pleased to work with the SB 969 sponsors to develop this proposed amendment to the legislation.

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<sup>1</sup> Record of Decision for Utility-Scale Solar Energy Development Resource Management Plan Amendments, <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2022371/510>.